

Israel to expand COVID jab rollout to 12-15 age group

June 2 2021



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Israel's health ministry announced Wednesday that children aged 12-15 would be able to receive coronavirus vaccinations, despite "a possible link" between Pfizer/BioNTech inoculations and myocarditis among young men.

On Tuesday, Israel lifted nearly all COVID restrictions after a

nationwide vaccination campaign for people aged 16 and up. There were just four new positive cases of the virus recorded in the country that day.

The [health ministry](#) also on Tuesday announced the findings of an investigation into a possible link between myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart muscle, and the coronavirus vaccinations administered in Israel.

An observation of 275 myocarditis cases recorded between December 2020 and May 2021 among more than five million vaccinated people found that 148 of them "occurred around the time of vaccination"—27 after the first dose, and 121 after the second.

"There is some probability for a possible link between the second vaccine dose and the onset of myocarditis among young men aged 16 to 30," the ministry said, with the link "found to be stronger among the younger age group, 16 to 19".

The ministry noted that 95 percent of the people with myocarditis were "considered to be mild cases."

On Wednesday, the ministry issued its stance on vaccinations for youths, in which it encouraged vaccinations for those at-risk—despite the myocarditis findings, while stopping short of recommending vaccinations for all children aged 12-15.

"It was decided to recommend imminent vaccinations to at-risk groups, including teens at medical risk of developing a serious case of coronavirus, teens living with at-risk family members, and families planning overseas travel," a statement said.

"Beyond the at-risk groups, anyone else interested will be able to" receive jabs, the ministry said, adding that vaccinations for teens aged

12-15 would begin next week.

Noting its report on myocarditis, the ministry stressed that the risks of coronavirus complications were "much higher than the risks of receiving a vaccination".

"The [vaccine](#) is effective and safe," it said. "Even the myocarditis observed among males aged 16-19 was in low numbers, and in most cases passed without complications," the ministry said.

At the peak of the epidemic in early 2021, Israel saw 10,000 new cases a day and 88,000 active cases, but a rapid campaign using the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccination brought those numbers down.

There were less than 340 active COVID cases in Israel on Wednesday.

Indoor mask requirements and [travel restrictions](#) are the last virus restrictions in place in Israel.

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